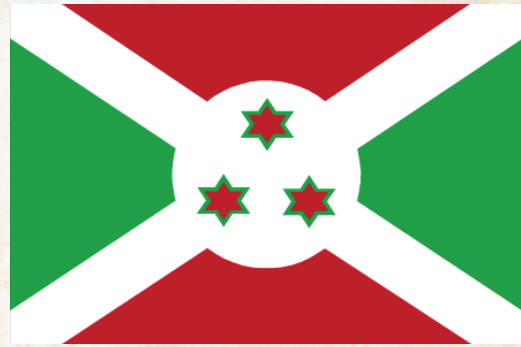


# WORLD Refugee Day



## Burundi

### Causes of the Refugee Problem



Full independence from Belgium was achieved on July 1, 1962. In the context of weak democratic institutions at independence, Tutsi King Mwambutsa IV established a constitutional monarchy comprising equal numbers of Hutus and Tutsis. The 1965 assassination of the Hutu prime minister set in motion a series of destabilizing Hutu revolts and subsequent governmental repression. In 1966, King Mwambutsa was deposed by his son, Prince Ntare IV, who himself was deposed the same year by a military coup led by Capt. Michel Micombero. Micombero abolished the monarchy and declared a republic, although a de facto military regime emerged. In 1972, an aborted Hutu rebellion triggered the flight of hundreds of thousands of Burundians. Civil unrest continued throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Some 8,500 of the Burundian refugees who fled their country in 1972 began the resettlement process to the United States in 2005. The “1972 Burundians” represent one of the world’s most protracted refugees situations, and until recently resettlement abroad was the only viable durable solution for most of them. Hundreds of thousands of Burundians fled to neighboring countries in 1972 to escape ethnic violence which killed an estimated 200,000 people. Generations of children of these refugees have been born in settlement camps while awaiting the opportunity to resettle in other countries.

### Need for Resettlement

Some of the refugees have been displaced several times in the Great Lakes region. In 1972, thousands of the Burundians fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda, as well as to Tanzania. But refugees in the DRC and Rwanda had to flee to Tanzania when conflict erupted in these countries in the late 1990s. At the same time, some Burundians had returned home after several years of exile only to seek sanctuary in neighboring countries once more when a new wave of violence swept their country.

It was believed by the UNHCR until recently that successful repatriation and reintegration of this particular group was not possible. After nearly 35 years in exile, they would be facing complex and unresolved land issues in returning home. Moreover, some refugees believed they are viewed as outsiders and would never be able to fully reintegrate in Burundi. Those born in exile identify closely with their host country, Tanzania, but Tanzania could not offer local integration to such large numbers. In February 2008, the UNHCR found that the majority of Burundians could repatriate to Burundi in its current condition. Tanzania has also agreed to consider citizenship applications filed by over 76,000 Burundians. It is believed that resettlement of Burundians to the United States will soon be closed.

Tanzania still hosts some 113,000 Burundian refugees in addition to the 1972 Burundians.

### Quick Facts

Number of Burundians living as refugees in Tanzania: 218,000  
Number of refugee camps in Tanzania: 3  
Number of Burundian refugees resettled by RST-Austin: 30  
Some Burundians have been displaced from their country since 1972.